

A Look Back, and Ahead

Former PEO takes stock of the Army network, efficiencies, and workforce development

by Margaret C. Roth

LEADING PEO EIS

Leanne Michaels from Product Manager Medical Communications for Combat Casualty Care (MC4), part of Program Executive Office Enterprise Information Systems (PEO EIS), explains the MC4 handheld device to former PEO Gary L. Winkler. The device is used by medics in the battlefield to access warfighters' medical records and to record injuries and resuscitative care for transmission to battlefield hospitals. (U.S. Army photo by Glenn Luther.)



Gary L. Winkler, an Army civilian for 23 years culminating in 3½ years as the leader of PEO EIS, saw dramatic changes in his career, and wished some other changes had been more dramatic than they were.

Winkler, who stepped down at the end of April to join the private sector, sat down with *Army AL&T Magazine* on April 27, in his last week as PEO, to share his perspectives on where the Army stands in today's computing environment and in the ongoing efforts to do more without more while building a robust Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology Workforce.

PEO EIS' mission is to design, develop, integrate, test, and field new network-based capabilities by leveraging commercial hardware and software solutions in finance, logistics, personnel, communications infrastructure, biometrics, medical, and warfighting functions.

PEO EIS typically is the "first in" to a theater of operations, to set up IT systems before troops arrive. Its portfolio is broad and diverse. Most of its large-scale systems support the generating force, although some of its systems, such as DOD Biometrics and Medical Communications for

Combat Casualty Care, support the operating force.

Winkler has seen DOD budgets wax and wane, and grappled with how best to make programs more efficient while ensuring top-notch service to the warfighter.

AN IT TRANSFORMATION

"It's been amazing to be part of the Army and DOD transformation to a net-centric, knowledge-based force," Winkler said.

"Earlier in my career, there were only mainframes and punch cards, and then we moved into the PC and workstation environment. Then it was client-server applications, which only worked for local networks. Now we have global enterprise systems that are web-based, and most systems are accessible through 'the cloud.' Cloud computing is now in play as the next evolution of server consolidation."

Over the next three to five years, the Army and DOD will be challenged to get applications into secure cloud

computing environments where they can function on smartphones and tablets, Winkler said.

"Without a doubt, network and information security will be the biggest challenge as we move to integrate commercial data centers, aka cloud environments, and commercial software-as-a-service into our operations and capabilities."

Software-as-a-service is a rapidly growing sector in private industry, taking business functions that can easily be treated as commodities—such as email, calendars, contacts, and tasks—and leveraging massive economies of scale to lower costs while meeting capability requirements. "There is not much risk in buying such capabilities this way," Winkler said, although there is risk with complex functions and capabilities, which are not appropriate for outsourcing to software-as-a-service vendors.

MANAGING RISK

"I had hoped to be able to move the Army forward a little faster in the mobile smartphone area," Winkler said in reviewing his tenure as PEO. "We have [security] solutions in place, but the processes to get those solutions approved are cumbersome and time-consuming, as always with anything new."

The Army and DOD are behind the curve in addressing security concerns with commercial technology, Winkler said. "It's not that there is necessarily a huge security risk or vulnerability with commercial technology, but rather we need to develop policies and processes to assess and manage risk."

“THERE ARE ALWAYS EFFICIENCIES TO BE GAINED WHEN PEOPLE ARE FORCED TO BE CREATIVE, AND I’M CONFIDENT THE PEO AND PMS WILL RISE TO THE CHALLENGE.”

“WE WORK LEAN SIX SIGMA REALLY HARD. I TELL OUR PEOPLE IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT PROCESS IMPROVEMENT BUT ABOUT DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE.”

There is no need to secure all data for everything, he said. “That’s simply not necessary because some data is perishable and is worthless after a certain amount of time. Other data simply is not very sensitive.” The Army and DOD are behind the private sector in the area of mobile smartphones, while security solutions are in the works. “It’s a matter of [managing] risk vs. making it perfect. So we’re just going to march along incrementally with the Android, the iPhone, and the iPad. But the genie’s out of the bottle.”

Industry and academia can help get new capabilities to market and into Soldiers’ hands faster, Winkler said. A number of organizations exist to foster such public-private relationships, such as the Virginia Tech Applied Research Corp. and the nonprofit Security Innovation Network.

FINDING EFFICIENCIES

Efficiency initiatives serve to formalize the ongoing practice of delivering required capabilities on schedule with less money, as opposed to maximizing capability against available budgets, Winkler said. “The key is for program managers [PMs] to figure out which efficiencies make the most sense for a program at its particular phase in the life cycle.”

Winkler is concerned that the Army, in its search for efficiencies, may impose new mandates that end up adding unnecessary complexity to acquisition processes, making them inefficient in the end. He noted that many PEOs are already following

business practices espoused in the guidance from Dr. Ashton B. Carter, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, because they simply make sense.

The stopgap continuing resolutions under which DOD and the rest of the federal government were forced to operate until April 15, when FY11 funding was signed into law, in a sense were “a

PRESENTING VSAT

Winkler dedicates the 3,000th Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) during ceremonies last fall. The VSAT provides warfighters connectivity in communications austere environments, such as remote camps, posts, and stations. (U.S. Army photo by William Hitchcock.)



good warm-up,” Winkler said. “There are always efficiencies to be gained when people are forced to be creative, and I’m confident the PEO and PMs will rise to the challenge.”

Winkler cited as one of PEO EIS’ best practices its PEO Strategy Map, a balanced scorecard based on the Strategy Map of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology. Each of the PMs within PEO EIS in turn maintains its own Strategy Map to measure monthly against the PEO’s. “It is all tied into the Army’s Strategic Management System, viewable by everyone in the Army,” Winkler said.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Besides keeping programs and solutions moving forward to provide needed capability to Soldiers and civilians, Winkler is proudest of PEO EIS’ success in developing the workforce and instituting processes to ensure that there is “no single point of failure,” so that the organization can mature even while people come and go.

PEO EIS also established a Human Capital Strategic Plan to develop the next generation of leaders at the PEO and PM levels. Part of its strategy to build new and existing talent is to recruit college students to work part-time while they are finishing their degrees, then hire them full-time after they graduate.

The Human Capital Strategic Plan was an output of a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt (LSS BB) project. “We work Lean Six Sigma really hard. I tell our people it’s not just about process improvement but about developing the workforce.” LSS is how people learn how a process “thread” is knitted through an entire organization, Winkler said. “And so they learn more



\$4 BILLION RESPONSIBILITY

As the leader of PEO EIS, Winkler was responsible for more than 2,600 military, civilian, and contractor personnel executing approximately \$4 billion in programs, or the equivalent of 56 percent of the Army’s FY10 information technology budget. (U.S. Army photo.)

about the organization, more about functional elements of the process.”

Another BB project at PEO EIS is looking at program offices to determine the right mix of entry, mid-, and senior-level staff. “I think the tendency, with a hiring freeze or a pay freeze, is that organizations will get top-heavy. We want to avoid a situation like we have in the contracting world, where we have a big gap in the middle skills,” Winkler said.

A key element of PEO EIS’ workforce development strategy, he said, is to

provide opportunities for internal mobility so that about 10 percent of the PEO EIS workforce each year can move into new assignments to broaden their skills and experience. “We’re not afraid to lose some of our best people” if it helps them and the Army, he said.

As Winkler himself prepared to depart, he said, “I’m practicing what I’ve preached to our workforce. I will have been PEO here for four years in October, so it’s time for me to move on.”

Since moving to the private sector, Winkler has been consulting with industry to enhance understanding of government requirements and help build relationships. He is also standing up a government support systems engineering/technical assistance company that will tackle IT, cyber, and DOD challenges. He also planned to volunteer in the office of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Chief Information Officer.

“I want to continue providing value added to the government, and I feel the best place for me to do that is with private industry,” Winkler said.

PEO EIS’ programs “are in excellent shape,” with “an exceptional team who will keep these programs moving forward,” he said. “It’s a great office, with a lot of talent.”

Winkler’s successor as PEO EIS has not been announced.

MARGARET C. ROTH is the Senior Editor of Army AL&T Magazine. She holds a B.A. in Russian language and linguistics from the University of Virginia. Roth has more than a decade of experience in writing about the Army and more than two decades’ experience in journalism and public relations.



PEO AMMUNITION



PM
Combat
Ammunition
Systems

PD
Joint
Services



PM
Close
Combat
Systems

PD
Joint
Products



PM
Towed
Artillery
Systems

PM
Counter
Explosive
Hazard



PM
Maneuver
Ammunition
Systems

